

# Pepin County Sheriff's Department

**John C. Andrews**  
*Sheriff*

**Kim A. Seipel**  
*Chief Deputy*

August 16, 2000

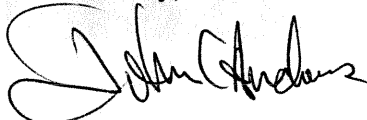
**Mr. Jim Bender,**  
Vice President/Special Assets  
Farm Credit Services of Northwest Wisconsin  
2396 State Highway 53, Suite 5  
Chippewa Falls, WI 54729-5592

Dear Mr. Bender:

I was contacted by Ron Huppert on August 14, 2000. Mr. Huppert gave me an envelope containing correspondence that originated from the Farm Credit Services office in Chippewa Falls. He has asked me to return the correspondence with the message that he does not want to receive any further correspondence in any manner or form.

If you have any questions, you may contact me at (715) 672-3443.

Sincerely,



**John C. Andrews,**  
Sheriff

cc: Ron Huppert ✓

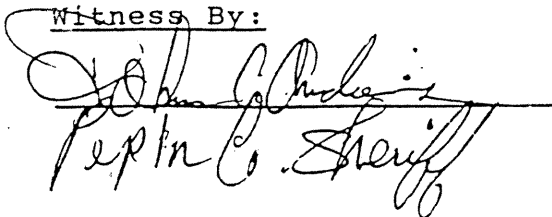
February 17, 1998

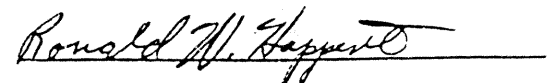
To:

1. For the second time we are meeting with Matt Bartz of Farm Credit Services to correct altered documents. The first time was 9-26-97 on our farm and Sheriff Andrews was present. I gave Matt the phone No. 672-5944 and he called the Sheriff out to our farm. I wanted the Sheriff to witness this. I corrected the altered document Jeff Peissig sent to our farm with my wife Darlene to have me sign on 6-22-93. Then Darlene also initialed the correction changing it back to a (Revolving Commerical Loan.) Then there was one other altered document which Matt Bartz didn't have along. Matt said, he would call Sheriff Andrews when he had the document.
2. On Nov.2, 1997 Darlene got a call from the Sheriff's Office of Pepin County. The Huppert's were to be at the Sheriff's Office at 11:00 A.M. Nov. 3, 1997. Farm Credit Services was going to be there with the document. Todays correction was taking place with the help of U.S. Senator Herb Kohl, by contacting Farm Credit Services in Sept. of 1995. Then Darlene corrected the document and initialed it. I also put my initials on the document making it legal, as the Sheriff witnessed.
3. When the corrections were made, Matt Bartz notified us that my operating-loan would not be extended, beyond Oct. 1, 2000. This will not allow us to pay the loan to zero. Now because of Jeff Peissig we have to get a new lender.
4. Now, almost 3 years earlier Farm Credit Service is telling me they are canceling out my entire operating account after almost 20 years.
5. My response was: Jeff Peissig and Matt Bartz are permanently (Banned) forever from Ron Huppert's farm in the State of Wi. They are Now Trespassers - we can't have people on our farm I can't trust. Farm Credit Service's has no lien on our farm. If they are caught on this farm as of Nov.3,1997. Anyone without an appointment with the Sheriff of Pepin County and myself Ron Huppert will be arrested. (Under Trespassing Laws of the State of Wi.)
6. Matt Bartz and Jeff Peissig are not to have any contact with any of my children, that are in the Pepin County 4-H Program. No more Threats! Any phone calls to our farm day or night will be considered Harrassment. I will contact the Sheriff again, and report it as I have done before.
7. (Because I have a criminal complaint filed with the D.A. of Pepin County.) I will no longer allow Farm Credit Services on land I own or rent in the State of Wisconsin. Farm Credit Service is History on this farm.

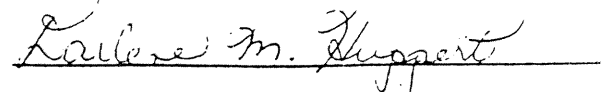
By, Ronald W. Huppert

Witness By:

  
John G. Andrews  
Pepin Co. Sheriff

  
Ronald W. Huppert

Darlene M. Huppert

  
Darlene M. Huppert

# Could the High Price of Milk Be a Byproduct of Supermarket Mergers?

By SCOTT KILMAN  
And AMY MERRICK

Staff Reporters of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

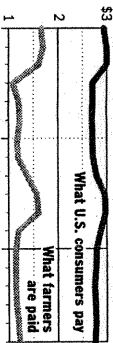
CHICAGO—Mention the price of a gallon of milk to a shopper here, and duck for cover.

Jewel and Dominick's, the two supermarket chains that dominate Chicago, are both charging \$3.69 for a gallon of whole milk—a record for the city—and consumers are taking action. Linda Val-laro, whose suburban Chicago family drinks two gallons of milk daily, says, "I will go without milk rather than pay" that price. She is taking her business to discount food stores that charge less than the chains—sometimes more than \$1 less.

Some economists say what is happening to milk is an early sign of how the merger wave sweeping through the supermarket industry might change the way food prices fluctuate. The top five U.S. chains now handle 40% of grocery sales, a share controlled by 10 companies five years ago.

## Milk Gotcha

Retail and consumer milk prices per gallon



Sources: Agriculture Department, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

At the heart of the milk dispute is the fact that the price of raw milk nationwide has dropped sharply since 1998. High prices at that time encouraged farmers to expand their herds, resulting in a glut of milk on the market today. Many Midwestern farmers are being paid the smallest amount for their milk in two decades. Some are

quitting the business.

While retail milk prices have been rising in Chicago, the average price of a gallon of milk in supermarkets across the nation has slipped 6%, or 18 cents a gallon, since January 1999, according to government surveys. But the same survey shows that the price dairy processors are paying farmers for beverage-quality milk has dropped about 26%, or 44 cents a gallon, since January 1999. And in the same period, the cost of the lower-quality milk used to make cheese has plunged 42%, but the average price of cheese in many supermarkets has barely budged.

The makers of dairy products, such as beverage milk and ice cream, say they aren't to blame for the price lag. "The reality is we are passing along our changes [either increases or savings] to the stores," says Barry Fromberg, chief financial officer of Dallas-based Sunda Foods Corp., the nation's biggest dairy processor.

So why aren't consumers benefiting? The rea-

sons vary, sometimes according to region. The six New England states, in a move to help the region's dairy farmers, three years ago set a minimum price that processors must pay for milk. With the processors passing this on, New England consumers saw an extra 14 cents tacked on to a gallon of milk, according to a July study by Ken Bailey, an associate professor of dairy policy at Pennsylvania State University.

Mr. Bailey also discovered something having little to do with the states' setting a minimum price for processors. When raw milk prices do fall as low as permitted in New England, supermarkets there don't cut retail prices like they used to. The new store strategy is costing the typical New England consumer an extra 10 cents per gallon on top of the 14-cent increase resulting from the processors' minimum price.

Traditionally, many supermarkets have sold milk at little markup to get customers into their stores. *Please Turn to Page B4, Column 3*

## Continued From Page B1

stores. At the same time, though, big grocery chains have always been slower to pass along lower milk costs to consumers than they have been to raise prices when cows get into trouble. And today, in an added wrinkle, the supermarket behemoths want to transform the dairy section into a profit center.

"A lot of grocers—perhaps because of consolidation—have decided milk is no longer going to be a loss leader for them," says Donald Ratajczak, an Atlanta economist who specializes in food prices.

Nowhere is the change more apparent than in metropolitan Chicago, which sits on the edge of one of the biggest milk-producing regions in the world. Milk traditionally was cheap for the city's consumers even though the grocery business here has long been one of the most concentrated of any major U.S. city.

According to industry analysts, at least two-thirds of all the groceries sold in the Chicago area are handled by Jewel and Dominick's, both of which were acquired by bigger companies in the past two

Inc. of Boise, Idaho, the nation's second-biggest supermarket chain. Dominick's was acquired by Safeway Inc. of Pleasanton, Calif., the nation's third-biggest supermarket chain.

The price the new owners of Jewel and

*Chicago and Milwaukee get milk from the same farms, but surveys show that last year Chicagoans on average paid 30% more per gallon.*

Dominick's are charging for milk is serving as an umbrella for other supermarkets in Chicago. These smaller stores can keep their milk prices high as long as the two big chains do so.

According to Agriculture Department surveys, a gallon of milk cost a Chicago consumer an average of \$3.32 at large grocery stores last year, which is 30% more than the price consumers paid in Milwaukee just 92 miles up the interstate. The

The price of a gallon of milk in Jewel or Dominick's in Chicago would be illegal in New York, the only state in the country that has a price-gouging law (in this case, one that is designed to stop retailers from selling milk for more than 200% of the

price that farmers got paid for producing it).

Neither Jewel nor Dominick's is backing down. They say they are competitive because they match each other's prices in Chicago on their premium milk brand. Each chain also offers a line of value-priced milk. In some scattered Dominick's stores yesterday, for example, Chicago shoppers who bought two gallons of the discount brand got it for \$2.09 a gallon. In many of the two chains' Chicago-area

stores, however, a gallon of the discount line was priced just one dime below a gallon of the premium brand.

"Other stores use the price of milk to drive traffic," says Karen Ramos, a Jewel spokeswoman. "What we choose to do is give savings on a variety of items." The owner of Dominick's says it doesn't much worry that smaller stores and convenience shops sell milk for less in Chicago. "We don't use milk as a loss leader," said Debra Lambert, a Safeway spokeswoman.

Among Chicago's unhappy milk consumers is Mary Ledman, who buys six gallons of milk a week for a household of five. Ms. Ledman was so startled by high milk prices during a recent shopping trip to Jewel that she quizzed the store manager, who told her that milk pricing is complicated.

It happens that Ms. Ledman is an economist who specializes in the dairy industry. She abandoned a cartful of groceries and now shops elsewhere. "Some retailers are taking advantage of a window of opportunity," she says.

OH... I see, it's "complicated!"



# Alice Clausung

WISCONSIN STATE SENATOR



August 24, 2000  
INTER-DEPARTMENTAL MAIL

Hon. Alvin R. Ott  
318 North Capitol  
P.O. Box 8953  
Madison, WI 53708-8953

Dear Representative Ott:

I was disappointed to learn that my invitation to sit with the Assembly Committee on Agriculture at its Durand hearing scheduled for August 28<sup>th</sup> had been rescinded. During the last legislative session we worked cooperatively in a bi-partisan manner to ensure passage of agriculture's two highest priorities – SB 358 (Animal Health Lab) and AB 314 (Implied Warranties in the Sale of Livestock).

Your decision to rescind my invitation to sit with your Committee, a common legislative courtesy, can only serve to politicize the process. We can ill afford to put politics above the needs of the Wisconsin's farmers, especially in these times of severe financial hardship.

I respectfully request that you reconsider your decision and allow me to sit with you and your Committee to identify ways to better serve agriculture in Wisconsin. Please advise me of your decision by 5:00 p.m. today.

Sincerely yours,

Senator Alice Clausung, Chair  
Senate Committee on Agriculture, Environmental Resources and Campaign Finance Reform  
319 South Capitol  
P.O. Box 7882  
Madison, WI 53707-7882





Bill from Senator Clausen's office called to find out if it would be ok for Alice to join the Committee in Durand since it is close to her district and she is the Chair of the Senate Ag. Committee. My response was that it should not be a problem since many legislators are coming to the hearings. However, Senator Clausen wanted to sit with the committee.

After consulting Rep. Al Ott, Speaker Jensen and Senator Panzer, I called back and informed Bill that Senator Clausen is welcome to come to the listening session but she could not sit with the members for the following reasons:

- we were restricted in the areas we could go into by leadership and we were restricted which members can be invited by leadership ( Both Dem. And Rep.)
- These are Assembly subcommittee members meaning the entire Agriculture Committee of the State Assembly is not going to be there.
- Members that are going had to be pre-approved by leadership. Thus granting permission for Sen. Clausen to attend is not up to the Chair.

If Senator Clausen chooses to come to the session, she will be recognized as a Senator and Chair of the Senate Ag. Committee. She may testify but may not be sitting with the other members as a member of the subcommittee. Other legislators have agreed to these terms.

Al has worked hard on keeping this non-political and it would violate that if Alice was allowed to participate more when she is campaigning.

Aug. 24<sup>th</sup> Thurs.

## RICHLAND CENTER

### Departure

Time: 7am

Place: E. Washington Ave. Steps

Boarding: Rep. Ott  
Beata  
Mark (Leg.C.)  
Sherab (Sgt.Staff)

Be sure to bring:

(page) Hearing slips, Paper and pencils, nameplates

(clerk) Hearing notices/tape, Tape recorder, Info Materials

Travel time @ 1 ½ hours.

Directions: University Ave west, becomes US HWY 14 N., turn Left on CTY O.  
go south for a quarter of a mile, Walmart on right side, near Equity Barn.

Parking: regular lot in front

### Destination:

Assembly Sub-Committee on the State of Agriculture  
Equity Livestock Sales Barn  
26702 Cty Hwy 0 53581  
Richland Center

Contact: Mike 608/ 356-0168x124 or 608/647-6151 manager Tim

Start time: 9am

Members expected:

R Ott, Aisworth, Spillner  
D Steinbrink

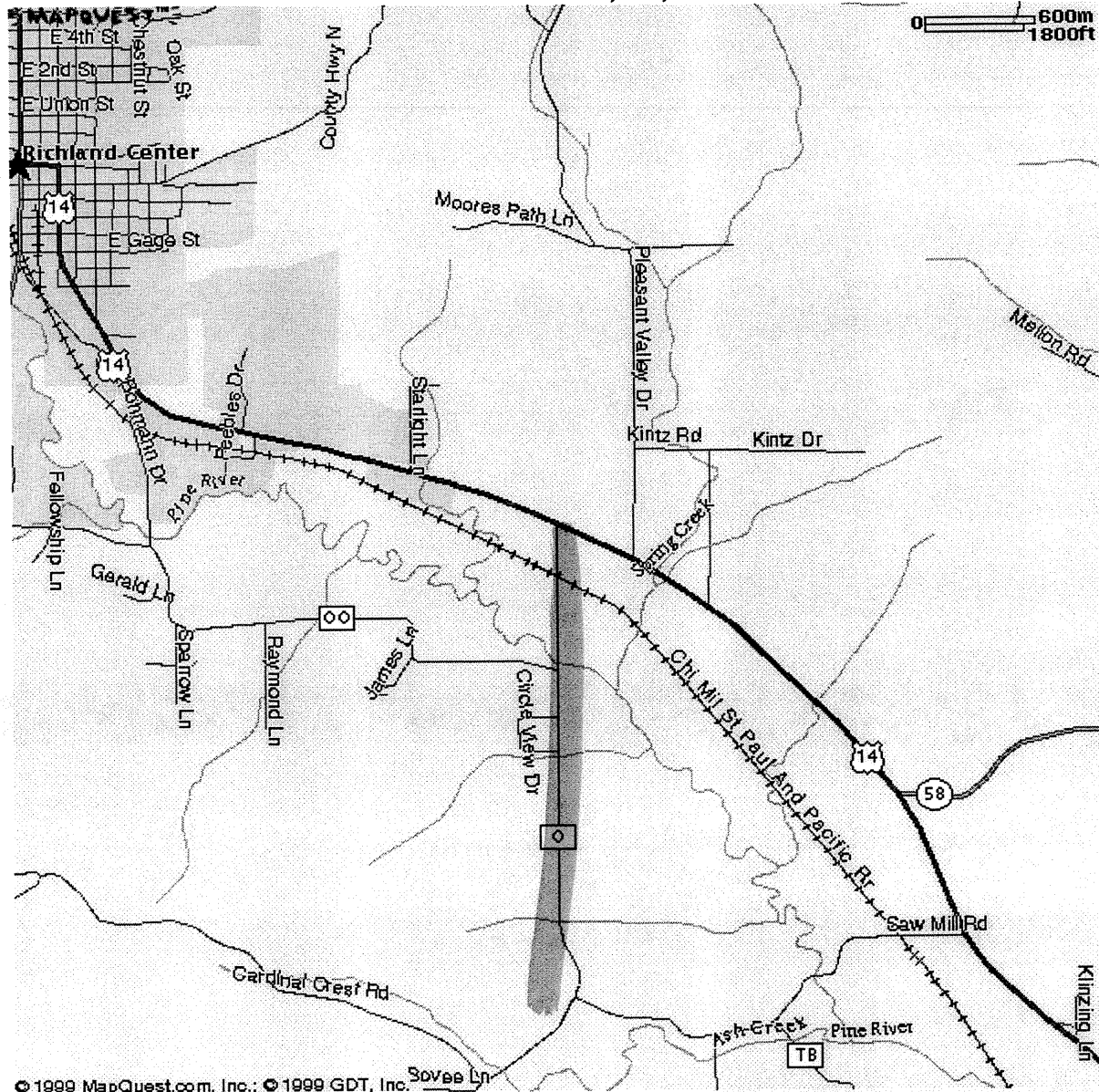
Accommodations: Tables and chairs set up in arena. Microphones and outlets available. Concessions/kitchen will be open. Restrooms available. Everything else nearby at Richland Center.



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1: Start out going Southwest on US-151 towards US-151 N.	1.1 miles (1.7 km)
2: US-151 becomes unnamed road.	0.0 miles (0.0 km)
3: Stay straight to go onto REGENT ST.	0.3 miles (0.5 km)
4: Turn RIGHT onto N PARK ST.	0.4 miles (0.6 km)
5: Turn LEFT onto UNIVERSITY AVE.	0.5 miles (0.8 km)
6: Turn SLIGHT RIGHT onto CAMPUS DR.	1.2 miles (1.9 km)
7: CAMPUS DR becomes UNIVERSITY AVE.	4.3 miles (6.8 km)
8: UNIVERSITY AVE becomes US-14 N.	51.0 miles (82.1 km)
9: Turn LEFT onto CR-O.	0.1 miles (0.2 km)
<b>TOTAL DISTANCE:</b>	<b>58.8 miles</b> (94.7 km)
<b>TOTAL ESTIMATED TIME:</b>	<b>1 hour, 47 minutes</b>

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# **REPRESENTATIVE AL OTT**

**State Representative  
3<sup>rd</sup> Assembly District**

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## **\*PRESS RELEASE\***

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Contact: Representative Al Ott**

**August 16, 2000  
(608) 266-5831**

### **Assembly Agriculture Subcommittee Announces Statewide Listening Sessions**

**Madison...**State Representative Al Ott (R- Forest Junction), Assembly Agriculture Committee Chair, announced today that an Agriculture Subcommittee will hold four listening sessions throughout the state during the end of August. These sessions will search out the crisis that is occurring within the agricultural community.

The goal of the listening sessions is to bring attention to the current agricultural price crisis and to allow the agriculture industry the opportunity to express their concerns. Additionally, the Subcommittee hopes that this effort will generate ideas and suggestions on how to deal with the mounting problems that the industry is facing.

"We understand that at the state level our hands are tied as to what we can officially do to alleviate the situation. However, as a committee we feel that it is important to go on the road to see for ourselves what is happening within Wisconsin's agricultural community. To get a complete picture of what is going on, we hope to draw individuals from all spectrums of the industry including farmers, processors, suppliers, cooperatives, implement dealers, feed mills, bankers, etc. We want to listen to whoever is being affected," said Ott.

The Subcommittee listening sessions will be held in the following locations:

- August 24<sup>th</sup> at 9:00 a.m. – Richland Center  
Equity Cooperative Livestock Sales Auction Market Barn - 26702 County Road O
- August 28<sup>th</sup> at 10:30 a.m. – Durand  
Spindler Dairy, Inc. – W5127 US Highway 10
- August 29<sup>th</sup> at 9:00 a.m. – Johnson Creek  
Equity Cooperative Livestock Sales Auction Market Barn - N6225 County Road Y
- August 31<sup>st</sup> at 9:00 a.m. – Reedsville  
Equity Cooperative Livestock Sales Auction Market Barn - 513 North 6<sup>th</sup> Street

For more information or directions to any of the locations, please contact the office of State Representative Al Ott. Madison office phone number: (608) 266-5831 or (888) 534-0003 toll free. E-mail address: Rep.Ott@legis.state.wi.us.

###

# **Agriculture Subcommittee Hearings Agenda**

These listening sessions are being held in response to the silent economic crisis that is taking place throughout Wisconsin's agriculture industry.

*Ultimately, the Purpose of the Four Subcommittee Hearings is to...*

- ✓ **Collect information in order to compile a report to be sent to Wisconsin's Federal Delegation and to US Secretary of Agriculture Dan Glickman.**
  - What is happening in Wisconsin agriculture.
  - Have this information as they return to Washington to vote on appropriation bills that deal with agriculture.
  - Wisconsin Legislature's hands are tied when it comes to something like agriculture pricing. However, we want to offer Wisconsin agriculture a voice.
  - Easier for the Federal Delegation to respond to the problem if they are well informed as to what it is.
- ✓ **Generate "*Ideas for Action.*"**
  - Generate ideas for action that **can** be taken at the local, state and federal level to alleviate the hardships throughout the industry.
  - May discover some action we can take to help Wisconsin agriculture.
- ✓ **Provide the opportunity to members of the agriculture community to express, in their own words, the impact of the current situation.**
  - Stress that these sessions are open to **EVERYONE** feeling the impact of the current crisis.  
*"From the Farmers to the Bankers."*
- ✓ **"*Press Conference for Agriculture.*"**
  - We hope that the media present will take the opportunity to talk to farmers and members of the agriculture industry and vice versa.
- ✓ **Raise awareness on all fronts.**
  - Inform people that may not necessarily be aware of what is happening in agriculture.
  - Make the economic concerns of agriculture more visible to the general population.
- ✓ **Provide information and resources.**
  - Hope to have information and various resource people available to field questions and to comment.
  - Let members of the agricultural community know that there are resources available and make the link between providers and those in need.

# REPRESENTATIVE AL OTT

State Representative  
3<sup>rd</sup> Assembly District

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**Contact: Representative Al Ott**

**August 21, 2000**  
**(608) 266-5831**

## **Agenda for Statewide Agriculture Hearings**

**Madison...** State Representative Al Ott (R- Forest Junction), Assembly Agriculture Committee Chair, released an agenda for the statewide Agriculture Subcommittee hearings that will be held throughout the next two weeks.

" We are going out to the farming community with a specific set of goals. I am confident that we can make these sessions successful if we stick to this agenda. The hearings are not a forum for political candidates. We do not want to overshadow this serious issue. This is however, a forum for people in agriculture as well as a chance to explore what can be done to keep the industry strong in Wisconsin," Ott said.

The Subcommittee agenda is as follows:

- **Collect information and report what is happening in the state to Wisconsin's Federal Delegation and US Secretary of Agriculture Dan Glickman.**
- **Offer the opportunity for members of the agriculture community to express, in their own words, the impact of the current situation.**
- **Make the economic concerns of agriculture more visible to the general population.**
- **Provide information on the various resources available to the agriculture industry.**
- **Generate ideas on possible ways to alleviate the hardships faced by Wisconsin agriculture.**
- **Bring the media and the agriculture industry together.**

The Subcommittee listening sessions will be held in the following locations:

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- August 28<sup>th</sup> at 10:30 a.m. – Durand  
Spindler Dairy, Inc. – W5127 US Highway 10 (\*note address change\*)
- August 29<sup>th</sup> at 9:00 a.m. – Johnson Creek  
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## Ag concerns expressed at listenings session

By Lorry Erickson  
Regional Editor

RICHLAND CENTER -- "There's a lot of folks across the state of Wisconsin who don't know and appreciate the kind of recession -- the kind of crisis -- that we are going through in agriculture," said state Rep. Al Ott, chairman of the Assembly Agriculture Committee.

Rep. Ott, R-Forest Junction, spoke at the opening of the Aug. 24 listening session in Richland Center. The session was the first of four held around the state by a subcommittee of the Assembly Agriculture Committee.

The sessions were intended to bring attention to the economic crisis in agriculture and to allow members of the agricultural community to express their concerns.

Other legislators listening to public comments at the Richland Center session included Rep. John Steinbrink, D-Pleasant Prairie; Rep. John Ainsworth, R-Shawano; and Rep. Joan Wade Spillner, R-Montello.

Listening sessions also were held Aug. 28 in Durand (see story on Page XX) and Aug. 29 in Johnson Creek. The final session will be Aug. 31 at 9 a.m. at the Equity Cooperative Livestock Sales auction barn, Reedsville.

Although the Wisconsin Legislature has no authority over ag commodity prices, Rep. Ott encouraged individuals who testified to comment on both federal and state government policies affecting agriculture.

Information gathered from the four listening sessions will be put into a report sent to U.S. Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman and to Wisconsin's congressional delegation.

"There is no easy answer, ladies and gentlemen. I think you all know that," Rep. Ott said. "The other thing I'm disappointed to have to tell you is I don't know if the state has any real ability to affect this crisis in any real quick way."

Although Wisconsin farmers are facing challenges, so are farmers and ranchers in other parts of the county, he said.

"I suspect that agriculture across the nation is struggling with many of the same issues we are. And in order for us to maintain a strong ag economy in Wisconsin, we have to buckle down and work our way through the rough times. If we give up, somebody else is going to come along and grab our business," he said.

About a dozen people testified at Richland Center, including Martin Tollefson of F&M Bank in Fennimore. Mr. Tollefson also owns a 112-acre farm.

Mr. Tollefson described the farms along a 10-mile stretch of road between Castle Rock and Bohemian Valley near Fennimore. Where once there was a farm every mile or even every half-mile along that stretch of road, just two full-time farming operations remain.

When Mr. Tollefson was a youngster, there were four implement dealers in



Fennimore; now there is one. Similar declines have happened in the number of feed mills, hardware stores and even grocery stores, he said.

As an agricultural lender, Mr. Tollefson said it is difficult to know how to advise clients who wonder if they should even continue farming.

When a farmer's net worth declines by \$15,000 or more three years in a row, Mr. Tollefson said there comes a point where in good conscience he must advise the farmer to get out of farming.

The current farm crisis is different from the crisis of the 1980s, Mr. Tollefson said. Land prices at the moment are good and unemployment rates are low, making it fairly easy for farmers to sell their farms and find a good job, he said.

Chuck Stevenson, a Viola sheep producer, raised concerns about the concentration in agriculture, both among buyers and sellers.

With so few lamb buyers, Mr. Stevenson said there is little competition, giving buyers an unfair advantage.

At the same time, concentration among ag suppliers means farmers have few options for purchasing inputs, Mr. Stevenson said.

"As you concentrate both the supply side and the buying side, (farmers) are getting squeezed from both directions," he said.

Mr. Stevenson also asked for a change in state laws regarding compensation for lamb losses due to coyotes.

"If the deer eat my neighbor's corn, the state pays for his corn. And if turkeys eat stored corn, farmers get help keeping them away from the corn cribs. But when the coyotes come and eat my sheep, I get looked at like I'm crazy for raising sheep," he said.

Mr. Stevenson is considering selling his 250 ewes due to coyote losses. He lost 30 lambs this year and spent 100 hours in July hunting coyotes on his farm.

Dan Deneen, an organic vegetable producer from Black Earth, criticized federal farm policy, saying the emphasis on maximum production and cheap food favors industrial farms.

He urged state legislators to look at ways to help farmers develop the infrastructure to market food more directly to consumers.

"We produce it and we're efficient at doing so, but someone else is gaining the value," Mr. Deneen said.

"The only alternative, in my opinion, is for the farmer to try to hold on to those products as long as possible, and try to control it as much as possible so that they can make the profit."

Muscoda dairy farmer Randy Jasper asked the legislators to investigate milk pricing. He said consumers are paying the same price for dairy products now as last fall when farmers were getting \$17 per hundredweight.

"Consumers are paying enough for food; that's not the problem," he said.

Mr. Jasper also questioned the use of biotechnology in food production.

"I don't see a shortage of food in this country, so why do we need to compromise the safety of the food program by doing a lot of biotech?" he said.

Earlier this year, Mr. Jasper attended a small-farm conference in Cuba. Cuban farmers, he said, receive a price for their products that allows them to make a living.

"If you look at world history, no country in the world has ever survived that has allowed agriculture to be destroyed or forced it to be destroyed. Well, we're destroying our agriculture and it's going to be gone unless we do something very, very soon," Mr. Jasper said.

Richland Center dairy farmer Raymond Schmitz also questioned the price consumers pay for dairy products vs. the price dairy farmers receive.

"The prices have not changed at the store that much, but they sure have at the mailbox," he said.

Mr. Schmitz suggested an audit on the prices of barrel and block cheese.

Jerry Lehman, a member of the Sauk County Soil and Water Conservation Committee, asked legislators to review the priority watershed program, especially the funding and design of barnyard projects.

"I can drive through my township and look at more concrete monuments to stupidity, as I call them, that were built on 30- and 40-cow barns that are now standing empty," Mr. Lehman said.

While concrete barnyards were installed on Sauk County farms where cows are no longer being milked, two brothers in their 30s building a 300-cow free-stall barn with manure storage are not eligible for cost-share funding, he said.

Mr. Lehman was told barnyard projects are sized according to the farmer's land base, rather than on the size of the herd and possible future expansion plans.

Norm Fruit of Viola was among those who voiced concerns about proposed state nonpoint pollution regulations.

Mr. Fruit said a one-size-fits-all program is impractical, both from economic and environmental standpoints.

Where Mr. Fruit lives in northwestern Richland County, 90 percent of the cropland is classified as highly erodible land. Requiring farmers to incorporate manure actually could cause more erosion, he said.

Steve Kohlstadt, Richland County Extension agriculture and resource agent, and Rep. Sheryl Albers, R-Loganville, also shared their concerns about the proposed nonpoint pollution rules.

Rep. Albers also questioned counties developing ordinances that limit the size of livestock operations and the purchase of development rights along state Highway 12 in Sauk County.

An appointed commission --rather than an elected body -- is overseeing the project. Rep. Albers is concerned farmers will need to have farm plans approved by the commission to farm in those areas included in the corridor.

Eric Drachenberg of Arena, who spoke on behalf of the Wisconsin Pork Producers Association, discussed several topics, including the interstate shipment of meat.

Under current regulations, meat sold out of state must be inspected by a U.S. Department of Agriculture meat inspector. Smaller meat plants typically only have a state meat inspector on site.

Both Mr. Drachenberg and Dick Hauser, former executive director of the Wisconsin Cattlemen's Association, urged allowing the use of state inspection in place of federal inspection for interstate meat shipments to aid producers who want to direct-market meat products out of state.

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"The rest of the economy -- especially in rural areas -- is probably not very far from starting to take the hit too," he said.

Mr. Hauser referred to the Consortium for Animal Agriculture and Resource Development, which met four years ago. One issue he said the consortium failed to address was marketing.

"That's really the problem: We're still marketing today the way we did 50 years ago, and we've got to change that," he said.

# Ag Committee Goes to Equity Sales Ball

By Joan Sanstadt  
News Editor

8/31/98  
Agriculture

About 50 people turned out the Assembly Agriculture Subcommittee meeting in Richland Center last week. The three-hour meeting was held at the Equity Sales Barn. Not a formal hearing, the event was "more of a conversation between legislators, the person asking a question and an expert who was on hand and who may be able to help." That was how Beata Kalles, the ag committee clerk, described the session. State Rep. Al Ott had invited several resource persons from a variety of state and federal agencies to be on hand to help answer questions as they were being asked. Although some people came only to

listen and gather information, about a dozen producers had specific questions. Here are a few of the issues farmers raised during the session:

What is the current status of the non-point rules?

As farming operations change from smaller to bigger operations, farming is becoming a whole different entity.

Why do we import so much? What happens to the money people pay for milk in the grocery store? Who gets the difference between what the farmer gets and the price paid at the checkout counter?

We need more government money and more cost-share money.

Most farmers do not want subsidies, they'd rather have a fair price.

Why don't we label our products as to country of origin? Mats for cows have to be labeled as to origin, but when we purchase meat, we can't always be sure where it came from?

Wisconsin should look at Ohio's exclusive ag zoning rules. In Ohio, if you buy land zoned agriculture, agriculture always takes precedence and this is written in the deed.

A sheep farmer complained he received no indemnity when coyotes kill sheep.

Why can't people buy Wisconsin cheese in Iowa?

Why do we need biotech foods? There's no shortage of food so why compromise our food supply?

# Current state of Wisconsin agriculture laid out at first Assembly Agriculture

JOHN ONCKEN  
RICHLAND CENTER

The first of four listening sessions scheduled by the Wisconsin Assembly Agriculture Subcommittee was held at Richland Center on Aug. 24.

Assembly Agriculture Committee Chairman Al Ott, Forest Junction, explained the meeting as "a forum for people in agriculture as well as a chance to explore what can be done to keep the ag industry strong in Wisconsin.

The Richland Center gathering drew 40 interested individuals representing agribusiness; farm resource agencies and farmers. Nothing that hasn't been said hundreds of times was revealed by the speakers (audience members), but the current state of Wisconsin agriculture was well laid out.

Martin Tollefson, ag banker from F&M Bank-Fennimore, outlined the farming changes that have taken place in southwest Wisconsin by summarizing the

farms on a 10-mile stretch of a rural road on which he owns a farm ...

"Every farm was a dairy farm when I was a kid," Tollefson remembered. "Today, only two of the farms still have dairy operations, one of which has 250 head and is expanding to 400. Several of the farmers had left farming, got jobs off-farm and were very happy in their lives; others had retired."

Tollefson expressed concern about his own 112-acre farm on which he lives,

some of which is in Conservation Reserve Program and out of production. The banker wondered: "Am I a problem or am I part of the solution?" When asked about the financial situations of his farmer borrowers, Tollefson admitted he had talked with some and emphasized, "I can't in good conscience watch farmers lose their net worth." He also explained that some dairy farmers were producers who "had a good financial start, do a good job farming without expanding, and



**SHARING FARM ECONOMY STORY** - Martin Tollefson, F&M Bank-Fennimore, relates the basics of the farm economy to the Assembly Agriculture Subcommittee members, who are, from left: John Steinbrink, Kenosha, committee clerk; Al Ott, Forest Junction; John Ainsworth, Shawano; and Joan Spillner, Montello.

(Photo by John Oncken)

FARMER

PAGE 11A

## Committee listening session

are doing OK."

"What do I tell farmers who ask about the future (of farming)? 'Dairy isn't good, there is no money in cash grain, and beef and hogs are OK now, but have had serious problems,' he summarized.

Tollefson recognized the financial crunch farmers face, but differentiated it from the "farm crisis" of the '80s, stating: "1) we now have good land prices and a farmer (in trouble) can sell and get out and ... 2) he can get a good job rather easily."

As for what the government could do, Tollefson replied, "I have no suggestions."

Greg Schmidt, who milks 450 cows at Valley View Dairy, Richland Center, and is a director of several farm cooperatives, expressed concern about the farming economy. "We don't need more government money to drag us along; we need \$14 milk."

Local farmer Randy Jasper told of his family members holding three outside jobs and milking 80 cows, and how they were having a difficult time. He questioned the value of expansion dairies.

Dick Hauser, Richland Center, owner of Neptune Enterprises (equipment distributor and sales), responded with a question: "What is better, a 30-cow dairy

operation employing people who want to farm and who get paid?"

Hauser, while admitting his income was down by one-third this year because of the depressed farm economy, questioned the current ag marketing situation. "I want to get in the face of government and professors," he began. "We in production agriculture are marketing the same way we did 50 years ago ... take a close look, we are talking about a commodity marketing industry, we're like the coal mining industry who moved from many businesses to just a few; same for the oil business," he explained.

"We have exclusive ag zoning," Hauser continued. "What does that mean when a farm can't expand? We blame the DNR, but it isn't them; it's your neighbors, your friends and the folks in town. We're losing the dairy industry, they are going elsewhere. Raising beef cattle is growing (as a farming enterprise) in Wisconsin - tell me how will we ever get a feed lot approved here?" Hauser asked.

The three-hour session ended with the ever louder bawling of cattle and calves - it was held at the Equity Co-op auction barn and there was a sale later on - without any conclusions. None were planned or expected by the ag subcommittee, who thanked the audience for their participa-



# Legislators hear ag concerns

By Lorry Erickson

Regional Editor

## RICHLAND CENTER

"There's a lot of folks across the state of Wisconsin who don't know and appreciate the kind of crisis — the kind of crisis — that we are going through in agriculture," said state Rep. Al Ott, chairman of the Assembly Agriculture Committee.

Rep. Ott, R-Forest Junction, spoke at the opening of the Aug. 24 listening session in Richland Center. The session was the first of four held around the state by a subcommittee of the Assembly Agriculture Committee.

The sessions were intended to bring attention to the economic crisis in agriculture and to allow members of the agricultural community to express their concerns.

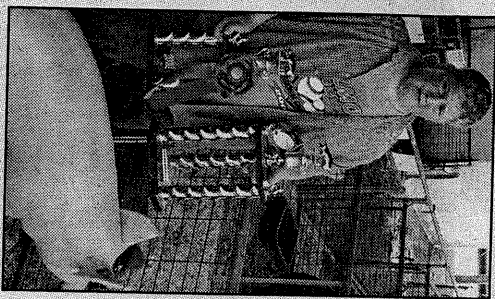


Photo by Lorry Erickson

Farmers and others interested in agriculture testified at the Aug. 24 listening session held by a subcommittee of the Assembly Agriculture Committee.

Other legislators listening to public comments at the Aug. 24 listening session included Rep. John D-Pleasant, Rep. Joan Wade Spillner, R-Montello, Rep. John D-Pleasant, Rep. Joan Wade Spillner, R-Montello, Rep. John D-Pleasant, Rep. Joan Wade Spillner, R-Montello.

(see story on Page 2A) and Aug. 29 in Johnson Creek. The final session will be Aug. 31 at 9 a.m. at the Equity Cooperative Livestock Sales auction barn, Reedsville.

Although the Wisconsin Legislature has no authority over ag commodity prices, Rep. Ott encouraged individuals who testified to comment on both federal and state government policies affecting agriculture.

Information gathered from the four listening sessions will be put into a report sent to U.S. Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman and to Wisconsin's congressional delegation.

"There is no easy answer, ladies and gentlemen. I think you all know that," Rep. Ott said. "The other thing I'm disappointed to have to tell you is I don't know if the state has any real ability to

affect this crisis in any real quick way."

Although Wisconsin farmers are facing challenges, so are farmers and ranchers in other parts of the county, he said.

"I suspect that agriculture across the nation is struggling with many of the same issues we are. And in order for us to maintain a strong ag economy in Wisconsin, we have to buckle down and work our way through the rough times. If we give up, somebody else is going to come along and grab our business," he said.

About a dozen people testified at Richland Center, including Martin Tollefson of F&M Bank in Fennimore. Mr. Tollefson also owns a 112-acre farm.

See LISTENING SESSION, Page 2A

County fair highlights

See Page 4B



# Ag concerns expressed at listening session

**LISTENING SESSION,**  
from Page 1A

Mr. Tollefson described the farms along a 10-mile stretch of road between Castle Rock and Bohemian Valley near Fennimore. Where once there was a farm every mile or even every half-mile along that stretch of road, just two full-time farming operations remain.

When Mr. Tollefson was a youngster, there were four implement dealers in Fennimore; now there is one. Similar declines have happened in the number of feed mills, hardware stores and even grocery stores, he said.

As an agricultural lender, Mr. Tollefson said it is difficult to know how to advise clients who wonder if they should even continue farming.

When a farmer's net worth declines by \$15,000 or more three years in a row, Mr. Tollefson said there comes a point where in good conscience he must advise the farmer to get out of farming.

The current farm crisis is different from the crisis of the 1980s, Mr. Tollefson said. Land prices at the moment are good and unemployment rates are low, making it fairly easy for farmers to sell their farms and find a good job, he said.

Chuck Stevenson, a Viola sheep producer, raised concerns about the concentration in agriculture, both among buyers and sellers.

With so few lamb buyers, Mr. Stevenson said there is little competition, giving buyers an unfair advantage.

At the same time, concentration among ag suppliers means farmers have few options for purchasing inputs, Mr. Stevenson said.

"As you concentrate both the supply side and the buying side, (farmers) are getting squeezed from both directions," he said.

Mr. Stevenson also asked for a change in state laws regarding compensation for lamb losses due to coyotes.

"If the deer eat my neighbor's corn, the state pays for his corn. And if turkeys eat stored corn, farmers get help keeping them away from the corn cribs. But when the coyotes come and eat my sheep, I get looked at like I'm crazy for raising sheep," he said.

Mr. Stevenson is considering selling his 250 ewes due to coyote losses. He lost 30 lambs this year and spent 100 hours in July hunting coyotes on his farm.

Dan Deneen, an organic vegetable producer from Black Earth, criticized federal farm policy, saying the emphasis on maximum pro-

duction and cheap food favors industrial farms.

He urged state legislators to look at ways to help farmers develop the infrastructure to market food more directly to consumers.

"We produce it and we're efficient at doing so, but someone else is gaining the value," Mr. Deneen said.

"The only alternative, in my opinion, is for the farmer to try to hold on to those products as long as possible, and try to control it as much as possible so that they can make the profit."

Muscoda dairy farmer Randy Jasper asked the legislators to investigate milk pricing. He said consumers are paying the same price for dairy products now as last fall when farmers were getting \$17 per hundredweight.

"Consumers are paying enough for food, that's not the problem," he said.

Mr. Jasper also questioned the use of biotechnology in food production.

"I don't see a shortage of food in this country, so why do we need to compromise the safety of the food program by doing a lot of biotech?" he said.

Earlier this year, Mr. Jasper attended a small-farm conference in Cuba. Cuban farmers, he said, receive a price for their products that allows

them to make a living.

"If you look at world history, no country in the world has ever survived that has allowed agriculture to be destroyed or forced it to be destroyed. Well, we're destroying our agriculture and it's going to be gone unless we do something very, very soon," Mr. Jasper said.

Richland Center dairy farmer Raymond Schmitz also questioned the price consumers pay for dairy products vs. the price dairy farmers receive.

"The prices have not changed at the store that much, but they sure have at the mailbox," he said.

Mr. Schmitz suggested an audit on the prices of barrel and block cheese.

Jerry Lehman, a member of the Sauk County Soil and Water Conservation

Committee, asked legislators to review the priority watershed program, especially the funding and design of barnyard projects.

"I can drive through my township and look at more concrete monuments to stupidity, as I call them, that where built on 30- and 40-cow barns that are now standing empty," Mr. Lehman said.

While concrete barnyards were installed on Sauk County farms where cows are no longer being milked, two brothers in their 30s building a

300-cow free-stall barn with manure storage are not eligible for cost-share funding, he said.

Mr. Lehman was told barnyard projects are sized according to the farmer's land base, rather than on the size of the herd and possible future expansion plans.

Norm Fruit of Viola was among those who voiced concerns about proposed state nonpoint pollution regulations.

Mr. Fruit said a one-size-fits-all program is impractical, both from economic and environmental standpoints.

Where Mr. Fruit lives in northwestern Richland County, 90 percent of the cropland is classified as highly erodible land. Requiring farmers to incorporate manure actually could cause more erosion, he said.

Eric Drachenberg of Arena, who spoke on behalf of the Wisconsin Pork Producers Association, discussed several topics, including the interstate shipment of meat.

Under current regulations, meat sold out of state must be inspected by a U.S. Department of Agriculture meat inspector. Smaller meat plants typically only have a state meat inspector on site.

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Cattlemen's Association urged allowing the use of state inspection in place of federal inspection for interstate meat shipments to aid producer who want to direct-market products out of state.

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"That's really the problem we're still marketing today the way we did 50 years ago and we've got to change that," he said.

**Napralla, Erin**

**From:** Lorry Erickson [lorry.erickson@centurytel.net]  
**Sent:** Thursday, August 24, 2000 5:57 PM  
**To:** Rep.Ott  
**Subject:** Richland Center hearing

I left my business card with the clerk at the Richland Center hearing, but just wanted to double-check about getting the list of the individuals who testified Thursday so I have names spelled correctly. I'm off covering other stories Friday, but need the list by Monday morning to finish my story.

Thanks,

Lorry

Lorry Erickson  
SW WI Regional Editor  
The Country Today  
P.O. Box 437  
Bangor, WI 54614  
(608) 486-4544  
[www.cvol.net/ctoday/](http://www.cvol.net/ctoday/)



## Kalies, Beata

---

**From:** Lorry Erickson [lorry.erickson@centurytel.net]  
**Sent:** Saturday, August 26, 2000 12:32 PM  
**To:** Kalies, Beata  
**Subject:** Re: list you requested

Thanks for the list! And yes -- it's Joe Schaitel -- he's one of the few I knew. He's from Sparta.

Lorry

At 10:08 AM 8/25/00 -0500, you wrote:

>Hi Lorry! Here is the list you requested - names of those who testified at  
>the Assembly Agriculture Sub-Committee Hearing at Richland Center on  
>8/24/00.

>

- >1) Martin Tollefson of Fennimore, representing F&M Bank
- >2) Chuck Stevenson of Viola, sheep farmer representing self
- >3) Dan Deneen of Black Earth, representing self
- >4) Randy Jasper of Muscoda, representing
- >5) Jerry Lehman of Reedsburg, representing self
- >6) Norm Fruit of Viola, representing self
- >7) Joe Schaitel (hard to read) raises heifers
- >8) State Rep. Sheryl Albers
- >9) Robert Franke of Bloom City, representing self
- >10) Raymond Schmitz of Richland Center, dairy farmer representing self
- >11) John Oncken of Madison, representing Oncken Communications
- >12) Eric Drachenberg of Arena, representing Pork Producers
- >13) R.F. (Dick) Hauser of Richland Center, representing self

>

>

>We also had a few invited guests from various agencies who made comments but  
>did not actually testify, if you need those just give us call.  
>Thank you for joining us!

>

>Beata T. Kalies  
>Research Assistant  
>Office of State Representative Al Ott  
>beata.kalies@legis.state.wi.us

>

>

>

Lorry Erickson  
SW WI Regional Editor  
The Country Today  
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\*\*\* ACTIVITY REPORT \*\*\*  
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**Al Ott**  
State Representative  
3<sup>rd</sup> Assembly District

### Facsimile Cover Sheet

Number of pages attached, including cover page: 2

If pages are not all received or are illegible, please call: (608) 266-5831

**Please Deliver To:**

JOAN SANSTADT

Fax Number of Addressee: 608/ 238-3966

From: BETHA KALIES, REP. OTT'S OFFICE

Message: Any additional questions? please call!

Committee Hearing at Richland Center on 8/24/00.

- 1) Martin Tollefson of Fennimore, representing F&M Bank
- 2) Chuck Stevenson of Viola, sheep farmer representing self
- 3) Dan Deneen of Black Earth, representing self
- 4) Randy Jasper of Muscoda, representing
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- 12) Eric Drachenberg of Arena, representing Pork Producers
- 13) R.F. (Dick) Hauser of Richland Center, representing self

# Committee Meeting Attendance Sheet

## Assembly Committee on Agriculture

LISTENING SESSION

Date: 8/24/200 Meeting Type: SUB-COMMITTEE ON THE STATE  
OF AGRICULTURE

Location: EQUINE LIVESTOCK SALES BARN, RICHLAND CENTER, WI

<u>Committee Member</u>	<u>Present</u>	<u>Absent</u>	<u>Excused</u>
Rep. Alvin Ott, Chair	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rep. Jerry Petrowski	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Rep. Eugene Hahn	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Rep. Steve Kestell	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Rep. Joan Spillner	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rep. Scott Suder	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Rep. John Ainsworth	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rep. Tom Sykora	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Rep. Barbara Gronemus	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Rep. Julie Lassa	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Rep. Joe Plouff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Rep. Marty Reynolds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Rep. John Steinbrink	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rep. Sarah Waukau	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Totals: 4 0 10

Beata Kalies

Beata Kalies, Committee Clerk

we absolutely no inking as to how he  
ely might rule.

## ool Term Underway

hough last year's budget bill con-  
a provision requiring school districts  
t classes no earlier than Sept. 1, the  
w also included specific language on  
istricts could change that starting  
to make a change, the district had to  
1 public hearing and get the public to  
ve the earlier starting date.

ack in my grammar school days,  
asota schools could always be counted  
start after Labor Day. It made it easy  
unites to plan vacations and farmers  
when their kids would be available to  
with fall work.  
When blizzards came up, school would  
ancelled and there was little thought to  
ing up the days" although students  
r a snow day would mean more home-

## n - Or a Mission?

Minneapolis to live with his two older sis-  
ters and finish high school. Some clippings  
I've found indicate he went out for boxing  
and won some matches. But most stories  
about John always seemed to reflect his  
love of flying.

When WWII broke out, John enlisted in  
the Army. The separate Air Force branch of  
service had not yet been created. After  
basic training John went to glider school.  
His sister later explained "he washed out.

Somehow he managed to get back  
into flight school but this time it was  
to train as a pilot. That's what he  
really wanted to do."

Several letters  
John wrote back  
to my parents and I  
even to Carol and I  
have been saved.

Other records also survive.  
For instance, we know he  
received his wings on Jan. 6,  
1944, and by spring he was  
on his way overseas.

I'll never forget  
the day we learned  
he was missing. Our  
parish priest drove out

week or two because so many students had  
already left to help with the potato harvest  
in northwestern Minnesota and in North  
Dakota. I don't think the students nor the  
parents ever asked for permission, in  
advance. They simply didn't show up for  
classes and the administration had no doubt  
about the reason.

When school resumed, there would be a  
lot of ruddy faces (more from being out-  
doors in the wind, than from the sun) and  
the students who'd been busy in the potato  
fields also seemed to have a lot of new  
clothes.

But school attendance rules, farm work,  
and the weather have all changed a great  
deal since then. Now snow days are usually  
built into school calendars. With new equip-  
ment, I've not heard of any "potato picking"  
delays. But what I have heard that is new  
this year is an allowance in school calendars  
for "hurricane days."

## Ag Committee Goes to Equity Sales Barn

By Joan Sanstadt  
News Editor

About 50 people turned out the  
Assembly Agriculture Subcommittee  
meeting in Richland Center last week.  
The three-hour meeting was held at the  
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clerk, described the session. State Rep.  
Al Ott had invited several resource per-  
sons from a variety of state and federal  
agencies to be on hand to help answer  
questions as they were being asked.

Although some people came only to

Anyone watching last Friday's Today  
Show may have caught a glimpse of a fami-  
liar figure. Yes, it was Tom Thieling, the  
Wisconsin Farm Bureau's director of  
Communications. The segment was filmed  
in a ditch along Highway 41 near Fond du  
Lac at about 6:15 a.m. Tom was asked to be  
on hand to comment on yet another anti-  
milk billboard sponsored by PETA (People  
for the Ethical Treatment of Animals).  
In this case, the sign featured a picture  
of New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani wearing a  
milk moustache. The message read "got  
prostate cancer? Drinking milk contributes  
to prostate cancer."

The billboard company has since  
removed the signs and the mayor has threat-  
ened to sue. However, PETA insists Giuliani  
is a public figure and has no right to object.  
Incidentally, Tom got back to Madison in  
time for the 9 a.m. use value hearing.

listen and gather information, about a  
dozen producers had specific questions.  
Here are a few of the issues farmers  
raised during the session:

What is the current status of the non-  
point rules?

As farming operations change from  
smaller to bigger operations, farming is  
becoming a whole different entity.

Why do we import so much? What  
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difference between what the farmer gets  
and the price paid at the checkout count-  
er?

We need more government money  
and more cost-share money.

Most farmers do not want subsidies,  
they'd rather have a fair price.

## National Farmers Union Plans Annual Fly-In

National Farmers Union members  
will participate in their annual legisla-  
tive fly-in, Sept. 10-13. During their  
visit, family farmers and ranchers will  
meet with Congressional representa-  
tives to deliver their "Two Cents Worth"  
message along with bags containing  
commodities produced on America's  
farms.

"Just as time is running out on this

the line being discontinued.  
The recording told callers the  
hours of operation, parking details  
and also advised nudity was legal in  
that area. Rep Johnstrud said he was  
frustrated because the agency had  
refused toll free numbers telling peo-  
ple "when seasons open and where  
the good fishing spots are" due to  
cost.

**The DNR is planning** to step  
up its education and enforcement  
efforts to help municipalities avoid  
diverting raw or partially treated  
sewage from their systems into rivers  
and lakes during heavy periods of  
rain.

Why don't we label our products as  
to country of origin? Mats for cows have  
to be labeled as to origin, but when we  
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Wisconsin should look at Ohio's  
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A sheep farmer complained he  
received no indemnity when coyotes kill  
sheep.

Why can't people buy Wisconsin  
cheese in Iowa?

Why do we need biotech foods?  
There's no shortage of food so why com-  
promise our food supply?

Farmers Union has spent the past  
month reaching out to policy-makers  
with their "Two Cents Worth" campaign  
to draw attention to the core agricul-  
tural issues faced today in rural  
America.

Fly-in activities will also include a  
briefing with Agriculture Secretary Dan  
Glickman and his top deputies on Sept.  
11.

8/24/00 Assembly Agriculture Sub-Committee Hearing at Richland Center

**1) MARTIN TOLLEFSON of Fennimore, representing F&M Bank**

Changing farm scene. Lots of small farms before and now fewer but bigger.

From a banking perspective, farmers have a tough time. Some operations such as Equity are doing well since they pool their resources. Stores in town usually manage to survive because pick up other traffic and are not dependent for farm business only.

Production/cash flow for large operations needs to be bigger. Investment is needed for new dairy operations. If big farms need 20,000 to make it, it would take a lot of smaller farms to reach the break-even point.

Selling farm to children is an option. Good land prices. If someone wants to get out of farming, now they can. Farmers' work ethic is in demand. Farmers can get other jobs.

(Jim/WHEDA spoke of the CROP loan program.)

**2) CHUCK STEVENSON of Viola, sheep farmer**

It's not a fair market anymore. Feels there is "fixing" going on of prices and that is a problem.

For his grain, he has fewer places to call for quotes. Prices going up. There is not much competition. Feels local supply has to be addressed.

"Your coyotes are eating my sheep"! He has no reimbursement from state for his loss. If deer eat corn, state pays for the corn. Wants compensation for his loss. Lost 30 lambs and spend hours trying to catch the coyotes.

Wants rules on how to get rid of coyotes addressed. A county bounty would be good. When he has a carcass of coyote, no one to help get rid of it.

Address the non-point / manure rules. Feels they are not fair.

**3) DAN DENEEN of Black Earth, organic vegetable farmer**

Feels current market system needs to be changed because it favors large farms. Feels it's disproportional. Larger operations get more money. Farmers are entitled to money for development and market their products. Emphasis on max production and cheap food = mega farms.

(Bruce Jones responds that based on percentage of income, it is not disproportional.)

(Greg from Equity responds that their business is farmer owned and is over 70 years old.)

(Barb from FSA responds that payments are limited even with large operations. She explained the price support program and safeguards utilized by the agency. They check to make sure payments are not abused and study the structure of the organization, especially if it is a large one, so there is no duplicating of money allotment.)

Dan feels large farms seem to get around any limits.

The state should

- facilitate marketing standards for family farms, help local economy and connect the consumer to the producer directly
- help farmers do a business plan for their operation
- get entitled Fed. Money and put it in the state infrastructure to support the local markets.

(Jeanne Meier responded that DATCP has a program to address the infrastructure development, and developing a system where individual farmers are helped. They have been tracking costs of production over ½ century and the gap of what it takes to produce and what the farmer gets in return has gotten smaller and smaller.)

Dan also suggests that farmers do not follow nutrient management plans because it costs money. If it is free than no value on it and more people would do it.

(Al added that there is no favoritism between small and large farms. Look at Dairy 20/20 – it's grants are for average operations. Economics direct what is happening. We do not pick and choose who should be in agriculture. Large operations are getting more publicity.

3

To: Wisconsin Assembly Agricultural Subcommittee  
From: Dan Deneen  
Re: Present Agricultural Situation

Aug. 24, 2000

Thank you for an opportunity to express my concerns regarding the present situation facing Wisconsin agriculture, and to give my opinion regarding some possible solutions.

I have worked the past 15 years as an agronomic consultant, and have farmed the past 10 years raising primarily organic vegetables.

I believe that the primary problem presently facing Wisconsin agriculture, as well as national agriculture, is that we have only one federal farm program that is geared towards cheap food and favors large industrialized farming.

Federal farm programs have evolved from being a temporary means of propping up farm prices during the depression, to a means of encouraging maximum production during the war years through the end of the cold war in 1990's, to the present welfare system.

Some might argue that cheap food benefits all of society, especially those with less income. However, cheap food policies are short sighted and do not fully account for all of their environmental, social, and economic impacts.

Federal farm programs will most likely continue as is, and will provide large industrial farms with sufficient capital to continue. The problem is small and medium sized farms do not receive sufficient payments to continue, especially if they participating in conventional systems whose inputs and markets are controlled by huge corporations and government.

To change farm policy at the federal level is essentially not possible. The state of Wisconsin should petition the federal government for the money that is entitled to these small and medium sized farmers, and with the farmers consent, use it to develop the infrastructure needed to market their products as directly as possible to those consumers who wish to support these issues.

Marketing standards should be developed that address environmental, social, food quality, rural development, and local economy issues. The state should help develop these standards, along with helping farmers with business planning, feasibility studies, organizational analysis, and infrastructure development.

Dan Deneen  
1633 Blue Mounds St.  
Black Earth WI 53515  
608-767-3746



8/24/00 Assembly Agriculture Sub-Committee Hearing at Richland Center

**4) RANDY JASPER of Muscoda**

national level:

Where is the money? There is a gap between what is paid to the farmer and what consumers pay in the store. Where does the rest go?

State level:

Why biotech? There is no shortage of food, why compromise our food supply with biotech?

(Audience member added that California milk is cheaper here. State should subsidize.)

(Al added that Wisconsin has to take a different approach because 85% of our products is sent out of state. What is happening in Montana for example would not be appropriate here because what they produce stays there. Easier to subsidize the farmer there, not possible here.)

**5) JERRY LEHMAN of Reedsburg.**

Member of Sauk Co. Soil & Water Conservation Committee.

Need to revise the priority watershed, especially funding of barnyard projects. Barnyard projects are sized according to farmer's land base rather than size of the herd and future expansion.

(Rep. Ainsworth suggested cost sharing dollars for manure storage for example are available to farmers.)

**6) NORM FRUIT of Viola**

national level:

Feels that anything done short term to enhance or maintain an efficient production is the wrong direction to take. We should not prolong the current standards.

State level:

One size fits all programs do not work in every case. Ex. Hillside farming. Non-point rules problem in area that is 90% classified as highly erodible.

8/24/00 Assembly Agriculture Sub-Committee Hearing at Richland Center

**7) JOE SCHAITEL of Richland Center**

Raises heifers now, used to be a dairy farmer. Feels there are other ways to deal with the crisis. Farmers need to figure out what will work for them.

Stop lawsuits with Phillip Morris. They own Kraft which in turn owns a lot of different companies including Oscar Mayer and others associated with farmers. We are suing and we end up paying.

**8a) STEVE KOHLSTEDT , agriculture agent with UW extension**

Non-point pollution has major impact and yet they do not even have copies of the proposed rules.

*Send draft of non-point rules that we have available .*

**8b) STATE REP. SHERYL ALBERS R-Loganville**

(Al has her written note of her comments.) Conditions in this area are unique.

-Questioned counties limiting size of livestock operations through ordinance and the purchase of development rights along HWY 12..

-Non-point rules. They will need funding for enforcement.  
Is this group prepared to ask Joint Finance of which she is a member?  
Is there enough funding being considered? What happens when funding runs out?

-Strip-buffers. DATCP and DNR are looking into their limitations.  
Elected officials should oversee development rights. Currently farmers submit plans to an appointed planning commission. The commission approves the plans including those in corridor.

8/24/00 Assembly Agriculture Sub-Committee Hearing at Richland Center

**9) ROBERT FRANKE of Bloom City**

It costs more to have consultants tell farmers how to farm than it is to actually do it.

Making a "golf course" of Wisconsin instead of farmland.

Export more but we import more too.

(Al pointed out that stress levels among farmers are quite high. Mentioned some of the programs DATCP is doing to help.)

**10) RAYMOND SCHMITZ of Richland Center**

Dairy Farmer. Operations expanded 4 years ago. Milks 450 cows and is president of Equity in Richland Center.

We don't need subsidy but better prices.

Prices in store have not changed.

-Need to do an audit of what determines prices, especially barrel and block cheese prices.

(Ron suggested what info we do have available about statistics.)

**11) JOHN ONCKEN of Madison, representing Oncken Communications**

Two organizations are changing the face of agriculture.

-Wisconsin Dairy Business Association. Farmers want to be in charge of dairy permits. Association determines number of cows.  
Ex. Boswell Ranch.

-Dairy Industry Alliance. People who work with the dairy industry but no farmers.

8/24/00 Assembly Agriculture Sub-Committee Hearing at Richland Center

**12) ERIC DRACHENBERG of Arena, representing Wisconsin Pork Producers**

national level:

-Concerned with interstate shipment of meat. Need regulations.

State level:

-Non-point. Don't let your guard down on this issue.

-need ag grants as resources for the public.

-need more involvement from Dept. of Commerce in ag arena.  
Seem to do a lot for main street programs.

**13) R.F. (DICK) HAUSER of Richland Center**

Former Cattleman Association ex.dir. Now farm supply representative.

Sees many projects put on hold because of the current situation.

-Need marketing system changed. Need government money to make it happen.

-Need inspections of interstate meat shipments. Aid producer who wants to directly market meat products out of state.

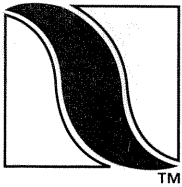
-Need country of origin labeling on products.

-Need exclusive agricultural zoning.

-Why such a hard time with expansions? DNR is not to blame. It's people who do not want odor.

Dairy industry is changing. Pork going down hill. Beef is growing  
And needs feed yards, lots of them.  
But non-point pollution means demise. Regulation = overhead.

Check Ohio's agricultural zoning rules. Written into deed is the fact that land is agricultural and that takes precedence over any development.



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13

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August 25, 2000

AUG 29 2000

Representative Al Ott  
State Representative  
3<sup>rd</sup> Assembly District

RE: Agriculture Subcommittee Listening Session

Dear Mr. Ott:

I attended the listening session in Richland Center last Thursday. The most important thing to come out of our discussion is the fact that the "Cashflow" of American Agriculture is very poor at this time because of low commodity prices. "Special programs or loans" by any organization or source are only a stop gap measure. The overall commodity prices of our products must improve if we are to work our way out of these difficult economic times. More loans, of any kind, simply add debt that must eventually be paid.

At the State level, I see these issues that I would like to make your committee aware of that perhaps something can be done. Health insurance is the first issue. I'd like to make you aware of. A great number of rural people are grossly underinsured or simply do not have insurance. I don't have a recommendation for this, but it is a terrible situation, especially when one considers our states overall economic situation.

Secondly, is the rural development issue. We must continue to support Rural Economic Development particularly in our small more rural areas. Thank goodness the State has done what it has in the past or our rural areas would be in even more trouble.

Thirdly, is the DNR and Environmental Protection Agency issues. I'm sure you have listened to enough compliant on this topic. I strongly fee that the livestock enterprise in the State of Wisconsin must not be put at a Economic disadvantage to our competitors because of future regulations that maybe imposed.

If I can be of any assistance to you or your committee, please feel free to call on me.

Sincerely,

*Michael A. Myers*

Michael A. Myers

Vice President of Ag Lending

(15)

**Napralla, Erin**

**From:** Lundrk@aol.com  
**Sent:** Saturday, August 26, 2000 11:09 AM  
**To:** Rep.Ott  
**Cc:** Lundrk@aol.com  
**Subject:** help for small frms

Dear Chairman Ott,

I appreciated the opportunity to sit in on the listening session you held at Richland Center on August 24<sup>th</sup>. It is good to know that members of our assembly are truly interested in the health and well being of family agriculture. As a member of the group categorized as farm supply providers I too am committed to agriculture. It has been a life long endeavor (nearly 30 years).

I would like to offer a few suggestions in regard to the problems and opportunities facing small farmers, especially those who do not have a scale of operation adequate to provide a comfortable income.

1. All of society, including agriculture, is moving in a direction where planning, analysis, and risk control generate more income per hour than hard work. Many small farmers do not analyze their operations at the enterprise level. For instance, they may be great dairymen but very poor crop farmers. Their cows may milk well but a high percentage of the calves may die or have chronic disease. Farming is a business and needs to be treated as such. Anything that can be done through county agents or local education programs that address this issue will help those who truly adapt and commit to good management practices.
2. Subsidized loans to an unprofitable operation are counter productive.  
They only allow the hole to grow deeper.
3. Farmers posses resources of value that are under utilized. For instance, hunters will pay top dollar for rough land to insure a place to hunt. If they could contract with a farmer for the privilege of hunting and be assured that they are treated fairly, the farmer could retain ownership of the land while gaining a second source of income. More farmers would probably consider this if it was an organized program and contracts were available that cover all issues involved. Construction of hunting stands and meals for hunters during the season are also possibilities. This also may help control deer populations, which are detrimental to crop production. A web site that helped match hunters with landowners could be beneficial. Matchmaker services pairing hunters with farmers might help get the program up and running. Optimization of this program could slow the transition of land from agricultural to recreational ownership.
4. Instead of selling rough land to vacationers, farmers could consider leasing it and providing services such as road and ground maintenance and security for additional fees.
5. I have lived in Nebraska, Kansas, and Iowa before moving to Wisconsin. I never knew the different types and qualities of cheese until moving here. The marketing efforts for Wisconsin cheese outside of Wisconsin are abysmal. Anyone who understood the difference between well-aged cheddar and chemically aged cheddar would have no problem paying the premium. It is much the same with other cheese varieties. Fine wines and quality liquors sell for several times the price of the generic varieties. A Wisconsin brand or label that is well marketed could bring huge dividends to the state at both the farm and cheese plant level. I am aware that there is already a program in place but it needs to have better funding and wider dissemination. Graduate students in marketing programs at the UW could be challenged to promote Wisconsin products as part of their education. Subsidies or prizes could be offered to the most effective.

Sincerely,  
Ron Lund

Sept. 20, 2000

Robert Franke  
20431 Highway D  
Bloom City, WI 54634

Dear Mr. Franke:

On behalf of Representative Ott, thank you for attending and testifying at the Assembly Agriculture Sub-Committee Hearing that took place in Richland Center on August 24<sup>th</sup>.

You requested to have minutes of this hearing sent to you. Please note that there are no official minutes. The recording device used did not produce good quality sound and therefore was impossible to transcribe any of the information.

The enclosed notes are based on the staff's handwritten notes taken during the hearing and are based on staff interpretation of the testimony. I hope this is still useful to you. Please let me know if you need additional information.

Sincerely,

Beata Kalies  
Assembly Agriculture Committee Clerk  
Office of State Representative Al Ott

Enc.